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COMMUNICATIONS, ORIGINAL AND SELECTED.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

ON COMPOSITION.

TO beginners in composition, the frequent practice of writing short essays, must be of very considerable assistance. They may be considered as the humble flights of intellect, ere its wing has acquired strength sufficient to undertake an excursion of greater length. As it is only after reiterated efforts that the mind is equal to the production of any thing excellent, let no one condemn the early attempts of the young and inexperienced writer, nor trample under foot the tender sapling, just shooting from among the rocks. Who can foretel the future character of the tree?

It has been said of one of the finest writers and most acute philosophers of any age, that he never completely understood a subject, until he had written upon it. Perhaps the same is in some degree true of every one. Superficial observers may pronounce this a paradox; but those of higher discernment will readily perceive its truth. The very attempt to commit our thoughts to writing, obliges us to do something towards arranging them; and scarcely any thing can be of more benefit than this exercise. It will by degrees correct that confused manner of thinking and speaking, which is so characteristic of the untrained mind. Almost all our powers depend upon practise; few are entirely without talents, and exercise is the surest means of deve-

loping and improving them;—by inaction they will become extinct.

The same arguments will apply with nearly equal force to metrical language; although it seems to be a very prevalent opinion that the practice of writing verses is an extremely useless employment of time. To differ from so general a sentiment is perhaps presumptuous; but there are reasons to be brought forward that may probably authorise our dissent.

It can hardly be doubted that composing frequently in metre and rhyme, is of very great assistance in furnishing us with a more ready and extensive command of language. It may at first seem strange that the practice of writing under restrictions should be productive of freedom; but that the fact is so, can hardly be disputed. The manner in which it operates is sufficiently obvious to those who have the smallest acquaintance with the subject of composition. In writing prose, we for the most part, adopt the first words that occur, thinking, what is not always the case, that they are the most expressive of our meaning. Our natural indolence too, inclines us to this, and when we have words that seem to suit, we refuse the labour of seeking for others. In writing verse, the case is different; then we must examine and choose. The restrictions of metre and rhyme are such as to oblige us to go over all the stores of the language in which we write, and select those words that

will express our meaning, without deranging the economy of the versification. Thus, by degrees an immense multitude of words will be brought under command, a knowledge of their several qualities and powers will be acquired, and such will their state of arrangement that they will be easily found upon every emergency.

But the most frequent, and indeed the most serious charge against young versifiers, is that they so seldom produce any thing of merit. This objection has some foundation, and would be decisive, if it could be likewise proved that excellency is not in poetry as in other arts, the result of practice. But this can never be proved. Every talent of the mind is progressive; and though practice will not always produce excellence, yet excellence can seldom be attained without long and laborious practice.

If the above premises be correct, it may be concluded that the productions of a young writer, are more conducive to his own improvement than to that of his readers. But it by no means follows that the productions of a young writer, are entirely unworthy the attention of others. The first efforts of youth sometimes possess a boldness and an originality that cannot but give pleasure to every candid mind. Unfettered by the customs and prejudices of the world, it may sometimes be given them to withdraw from the altar of truth that veil which has resisted the efforts of age and experience.

Turn not then with disdain, you veterans in the fields of literature, from the humble attempts of the inexperienced and feeble. Your smile may animate them to a nobler daring, but your contempt may extinguish for ever that ardour without which excellency can hardly be attained.

E.C.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

WHO was the real author of the letters signed Junius has long been a subject of discussion in the political world, and it is certainly a phenomenon in politics, that after a lapse of forty years, the author of a work which acquired so much celebrity on its appearance, should remain unknown: vanity which operates in general so much on literary, as well as other men, in favour of their own productions, must have been overpowered by other strong feelings to produce that secrecy which excites our astonishment. Whether the secret is deposited in the breast of any person now living, or whether Junius yet lives, is uncertain. Horne Tooke, one of his ablest antagonists, still hovers over the grave, and many others of his contemporaries remain; but as most of the personages mentioned in those letters are no more, and as a prosecution on account of them can no longer be dreaded, it is more than probable the secret was confined to Junius, and now rests with him in the silent tomb.

Various persons have been named as the supposed author, among others the late Hugh M'Aulay Boyd, a native and an ornament of this county. This opinion seems to have given great umbrage to your correspondent A.P. in your Magazine for December last, and with much confidence he charges the London printers with impudence in lately attempting to palm this opinion on a public equally inquisitive and credulous. To what publication A.P. alludes I am not certain; the latest I have seen on the subject was published in London, in 1800, and is entitled, "*The miscellaneous works of Hugh Boyd, the author of the letters of Junius.*" The perusal of this work has led me to form a different opinion